



# The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

ISSUE 8

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## Traveller Conference Success

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### The Road Ahead

The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITMB) Conference – November 19<sup>th</sup> 2008 was a great success. Over 200 people attended.

Minister Iain Wright said the Government were committed to seeing more sites built, this would raise the social inclusion of Travellers and ease community tensions.

The Minister has written to local authorities asking for an update on what they have done on Traveller site delivery. The responses received will inform the Government's next steps.

The minister felt that Traveller role models working as community workers and in schools and with other services had an important role in breaking negative stereotypes about this group.

See the speech in full at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/irishtravellermovement>



### ACPO Gives Assurance on Traveller Guidance

Assistant Chief Constable Bill Holland who attended and spoke at the 'Road Ahead' is the Association of Chief Police Officer's lead spokesperson on Travellers. Bill gave an assurance that Gypsy and Traveller organizations would be able to comment and feed their views into new ACPO guidance on unauthorized encampments. Bill stressed the need for better communication and trust between the police and Gypsies and Travellers. Contact the ITMB for the draft ACPO guidance.

A full conference report will be available shortly.

“Key Time for Travellers’ Rights”  
Rodney Bickerstaffe

A Voice  
for  
Travellers

Planning  
Planning  
Planning  
Planning

## Pre Conference Social

At a pre conference social event the Docherty family from Harin-gey entertained the assembled audience with traditional Irish folk songs.

Rodney Bickerstaff (former General Secretary of Unison) said the coming months would be a key time in the campaign for Traveller rights, as the governments new policies to deliver much needed Traveller sites would be tested by media and political opposition.

Derek Hanway of An Munia Tober (Belfast Traveller Support Project) said he had come over for the conference with 7 Travellers from Northern Ireland as it was important to maintain links between Traveller projects in Ireland and England.

## Capacity Building

The ITMB has received funding from Capacity Builders to help Gypsies, Travellers and Roma develop community groups and representation in policy forums.

Would you like help to develop or start a Traveller group?

Are you interested in help from the ITMB to set up a Traveller Inter Agency Forum?

Contact our new staff members

Shahida Awan—Senior Capacity Building Officer (South)

Preston Scott Phillips—Capacity Building Officer (Midlands/North)

## Planning For A Better Future

The ITMB gave evidence to the examination in Public for the east of England Regional Assembly consultation on Traveller site provision. A written submission has also been made for the South East Regional Assembly consultation.

In a submission to the Greater London Authority planning consultation ‘Planning for a Better Future’ the ITMB are pressing the Mayor and the GLA to be proactive in helping London develop the Traveller sites that are needed.

A joint letter from the ITMB and London Planning Aid has been sent to all 33 London Boroughs asking them what they have done and intend to do in delivering new Traveller sites for London. For more information contact our new Partnership and Development Officer (London) Phil Regan.

## Traveller Accommodation

At the Communities and Local Government Traveller Stakeholder Forum on the 26/11/2008 concerns were expressed at the speed of delivery by councils of Traveller sites. The ITMB joined these concerns and expressed fears about community relations being damaged by newspapers and politicians using this issue as a political football.

Civil servants said that the minister Iain Wright MP had written to councils asking for an update on site delivery plans from councils, this would inform what action the Government took next.

It was also announced that new guidance would be issued on Maintaining community relations shortly.



## Daily Express Storm

The ITMB has joined other groups in complaining to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) about the Daily Express article in the Daily Express on the 17th November. The article entitled 'Families Must Sell Land for Gypsy Campsites' in the opinion of the ITMB makes a series of misleading statements which clearly breach the PCC code on accuracy. The editorial entitled 'Grabbing Land to Settle Gypsies' claims that many Roma and Irish Travellers live of the proceeds of crime. The ITMB believe this breaches the PCC code on harassment and incites racial hatred.

Part of the furore was triggered by Eleanor Laing MP for Epping Forest. Ms Laing was accused in parliament by Sadiq Khan of "scaremongering" in her local community. The ITMB has written to David Cameron MP about the behaviour of Ms Laing a spokesperson for Justice.

## Need for Consensus

The ITMB has produced a discussion paper expressing concern at the actions of politicians in all of the three main parties on Gypsy and Traveller issues.

The paper recommends a series of actions points on how to achieve greater cross party consensus on the need for more Travellers sites. To read the draft report visit:

<http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/policy/briefings>

An early day motion has been tabled by Julie Morgan MP calling for consensus on the need for more sites. The motion is the appendix of the discussion paper. [Please get your MP to sign](#)



## Contact Us

### **Irish Traveller Movement in Britain,**

The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Rd,

London N7 6PA

Tel 0207 607 2005

[info@irishtraveller.org.uk](mailto:info@irishtraveller.org.uk)

<http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/>

### **Some Useful Traveller Help Lines**

#### Friends Families and Travellers

01273 234 777

#### Travellers Advice Team for legal advice

0845 120 2980

## Condolences

### Tragic Deaths

- It is with great sadness that the ITMB reports the death of eleven year old Ritchie McDonagh who died in a hit and run incident in Brent. The police are still looking for one of the car drivers involved in this incident.
- We are also deeply saddened to report the death of Marie McCarthy wife of Patrick, who died before Christmas.

Our thoughts, prayers and sympathies are with the families concerned.



## Latest News

- **Dale Farm**—On the 5th December Basildon Council tried to overturn the ruling of Justice Collins at the Court of Appeal. Justice Collins had ruled that Basildon Council should postpone eviction plans at Dale Farm Traveller Site and identify new sites. A judgement is expected shortly.
- **Launch of Accommodation Report** - The ITMB together with the Race Equality Foundation and the Traveller Law Reform Project will host the launch of a report by Dr Margaret Greenfields on Traveller accommodation at the House of Commons on the 29th January.
- **Challenge to New Sites**—Thurrock, Southampton and Portsmouth councils have said they will not develop more sites despite being identified as needing more Traveller accommodation. Basildon and Southend Councils are reported to be considering legal challenges to the pitch allocations they received as part of the East of England regional spatial strategy (Full report in the next edition)